

REMARKS

This Preliminary Amendment submits the changes identified above, and is responsive in any manner indicated below.

PENDING CLAIMS

Claims 1-23 are cancelled, and new Claims 24-43 are presented to refocus the application to claims in which Applicant is presently interested. At entry of this paper, Claims 24-43 are pending for consideration and examination in the application.

CLAIM FOR PRIORITIES UNDER §§119 AND 120

Applicant claims priority of JP 9-224605 filed 21 August 1997 under 35 USC §119. The certified copy of the priority document was filed in prior Application No. 09/135,727. Applicant respectfully requests written acknowledgment of the completion of requirements for the claim under §119.

Applicant claims benefit under 35 USC §120 of prior applications 10/376,231 filed 3 March 2003, pending, which is a continuation of 09/135,727 filed 18 August 1998, now US 6,549,243 B1. The specification has been amended herein to identify the applications upon which benefit is claimed in the present continuation. Applicant respectfully requests written acknowledgment of the completion of requirements for the claim under §120.

ASSIGNEE OF ENTIRE INTEREST

HITACHI, LTD. is Assignee of entire right, title and interest in and to the present continuation application by virtue of the Assignment filed in prior Application No. 09/135,727 and recorded in the USPTO on 18 August 1998 at Reel 9411, Frames 0001 *et seq.*

RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

It is respectfully submitted that any and all claim amendments and/or cancellations submitted within this paper and throughout prosecution of the present application are without prejudice or disclaimer. That is, any above statements, or any present amendment or cancellation of claims (all made without prejudice or disclaimer), should not be taken as an indication or admission that any objection/rejection was valid, or as a disclaimer of any scope or subject matter. Applicant respectfully reserves all rights to file subsequent related application(s) (including reissue applications) directed to any/all previously claimed limitations/features which have been subsequently amended or cancelled, or to any/all limitations/features not yet claimed, i.e., Applicant continues (indefinitely) to maintain no intention or desire to dedicate or surrender any limitations/features of subject matter of the present application to the public.

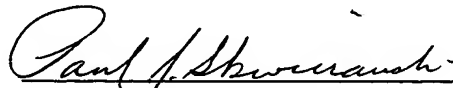
EXAMINER INVITED TO TELEPHONE

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the local DC area number 703-312-6600, to discuss an Examiner's Amendment or other suggested action for accelerating prosecution and moving the present application to allowance.

CONCLUSION

This Preliminary Amendment is filed concurrently with the present continuation, and no Petition or extension fee is possible or required. Please charge any deficiencies in appropriate fees to ATS&K Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (as Order No. 501.36105CC2).

Respectfully submitted,



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